

"The Assignment"

Theodor Nelson

88 Central Park West
New York 23, N.Y.

"The Assignment"

The third floor hall was long and the rug was worn, and the few unfrosted bulbs didn't give off quite enough light to see with. The young man stopped for the fourth time in front of the apartment door. He squinted through his thick glasses at the number, and again made sure it was the right one. Impulsively he rang the doorbell. Then he stood there waiting, riffling his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the Bureau of Emergency Measures. I was assigned, uh," and he said something else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.

Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall, even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no need for anyone else. She licked her lips quickly and smiled again. "Uh, come on in."

The young man came in, and the girl clumsily took off his coat. She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"

"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very quickly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat. Not wanting to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and sighed as though he were very comfortable.

"The Assignment"

The third floor hall was long and the rug was worn, and the few
unfaded bulbs didn't give off quite enough light to see with. The
young man stopped for the fourth time in front of the apartment
door. He pointed through his thick glasses at the number, and again
made sure it was the right one. Impulsively he rang the doorbell.
Then he stood there waiting, watching the fingers nervously in the
air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.
"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the Bureau
of Emergency Measures. I was assigned, uh," and he said something
else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.
Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall,
even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no need for
anyone else. She looked her life quickly and smiled again. "Uh,
come on in."
The young man came in, and the girl quickly took off his coat.
She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.
"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some
coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"
"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very
quietly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat. Not wanting
to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and sighed as
though he were very comfortable.

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you very much."

"Fine," she said, and left the room through a side door.

He riffled his fingers some more and wondered about what would happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room and he squinted at it, trying to see what he looked like. His gray suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not many civilians were better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was greasy, but at least it was all in place. He wasn't really satisfied with the way he looked, but there was nothing he could do about it. The girl wasn't actually pretty enough that it mattered, anyway. She did excite him a little, though, but that was probably because of what was going to happen. He squirmed a little, and crossed his legs the other way.

The room was nothing special. There was a colored picture of a dog on the dresser. It looked like a friendly dog, but he realized that was a foolish idea. He had only once seen a live dog. It had come toward him on the street, but he couldn't be sure it was friendly and he had thrown a rock at it. He wished the girl would come back.

She did come back, carrying a tray of coffee things. She put it on the dresser. Then she sat down herself and tried to think of something to say.

He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing he had said to her. Silently he stirred saccharin into his cup.

"But are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all ready."
"I don't want any," she explained.
The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you very much."
"Fine," she said, and left the room through a side door.
He tilted his fingers nervously and wondered about what would happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room and he squinted at it, trying to see what he looked like. His grey suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not many civilians were better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was greasy, but at least it was all in place. He wasn't really satisfied with the way he looked, but there was nothing he could do about it. The girl wasn't actually pretty enough that it mattered, anyway. She did excite him a little, though, but that was probably because of what was going to happen. He admired a little, and crossed his legs the other way.
The room was nothing special. There was a tilted picture of a dog on the dresser. It looked like a friendly dog, but he realized that was a foolish idea. He had only once seen a live dog. It had come toward him on the street, but he couldn't be sure it was friendly and he had thrown a rock at it. He wished the girl would come back. She did come back, carrying a tray of coffee things. She put it on the dresser. Then she sat down herself and tried to think of something to say.
He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing he had said to her. Silently he stirred sugar into the cup.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do." She wet her lips, as she always did when she would think of nothing to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.

"No, I don't want it black, but it was very thoughtful of you. Thank you again." He added cream. It wasn't really cream, it was a kind of starch emulsion, but people called it cream. It changed the color and flavor of your coffee a little, and most people had forgotten the difference anyway.

"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I thought you might be one of them."

"No," he said, "I'm normal."

"That's good," said the girl. She wet her lips and laughed a little.

"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody," he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet ~~her~~ lips. "By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Uh, my name is Peter. Bronsky. Peter Bronsky."

"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."

"Please call me Peter," he said.

"All right," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He sipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here," she added. We just moved in when the war started.

"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and forced a smile.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to
like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do."
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to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.
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forgotten the difference anyway.
"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I
thought you might be one of them."
"No," he said, "I'm normal."
"That's good," said the girl. She wet her lips and laughed a
little.
"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody,"
he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you that?"
"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet her lips.
"By the way, you haven't told me your name."
"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Um, my name is Peter, Brooklyn."
"Peter Brooklyn?"
"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."
"Please call me Peter," he said.
"All right," said Ann.
He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He
sipped coffee.
"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here,"
she added. She just moved in when the war started.
"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and formed a smile.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all right.* I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained. "More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got assigned here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked for it to be this way, because, you know, that test tube business, well. I'd rather it was you know, like I said. Natural." She looked at him and smiled a little. He smiled back, and took a quick sip of coffee.

"I understand how you feel," said Peter. "I guess the Committee doesn't care how, as long as you have a baby."

"I talked it over with my mother," said Ann. "She told me to do it this way, because it's, well." She laughed, looking at the floor. "Nicer."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man. "I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, riffling the fingers of his left hand. "Of course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter, "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flabby woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bronsky, Mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bronsky. This is my mother," she repeated.

"~~Mr~~ Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all

right. I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained.

"More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want

to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got satisfied here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked for it to be this way, because

you know, that sort of business, well, I'd rather it was you than

like I said, Natural." She looked at him and smiled a little. He

smiled back, and took a quick sip of coffee.

"I understand how you feel," said Peter. "I guess the Committee

doesn't care how, as long as you have a baby."

"I talked it over with my mother," said Ann. "She told me to

do it this way, because it's, well," she laughed, looking at the

floor. "Nice."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man.

"I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, lifting the fingers of his left hand. "Of

course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter. "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flashy woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bronsky, Mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bronsky. This is my mother," she repeated.

"Now please to meet you," said Peter.

"Mother, Mr. Bronsky is from the Committee on Emergency Measures."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling," she said, hurriedly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Bronsky, it was nice meeting you." He held out his hand and she took it. ~~Her hand was warm and dry~~ The flesh of her hand was loose and damp, but her grip was tight. "Please, Mr. Bronsky," she said, "don't hurt her." She left the room and closed the door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do something else first, or something."

"Something like what?"

"I don't know. There are lots of other things to do. I can't think of anything special."

"Well, this is kind of a job. I mean I think we better not. We have to remember, it is, like, kind of a job."

"Oh, of course, you're right."

He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."

"Gee, I guess so."

"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better tell you, you're very nice." He riffled his fingers and tried to

"Mother, Mr. Brown is from the Committee on Emergency Management."
"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"
"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.
Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two
alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling."
she said, hurriedly.
"Good night," said Ann.
Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Brown, it is nice meeting you."
He held out his hand and she took it. "Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Lang."
The flesh of her hand was loose and limp, but
her grip was tight. "Please, Mr. Brown," she said, "don't hurt her."
She left the room and closed the door gently.
Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.
"Thank you very much," said the girl.
He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well,"
he said.
"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do some-
thing else first, or something."
"Something like what?"
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think of anything special."
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have to remember, is it, like, kind of a job."
"Oh, of course, you're right."
He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."
"Gee, I guess so."
"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better
tell you, you're very nice." He smiled at her and tried to

look very sincere. "I can't think of anybody I'd rather do it with."

"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."

"All right," she said, trying to smile.

look very pleasant. "I can't tell of anybody I'd rather do it with."
"Thank you," she said.
"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."
"All right," she said, trying to smile.

The Assignment

~~He knew he had to find the apartment in the building~~

The third floor hall was long and the rug was worn, and the few unfrosted bulbs didn't give off enough light to see with. The young man stopped for the fourth time in front of the apartment door. He squinted through his thick glasses at the number, and again made sure it was the right one. Impulsively he rang the doorbell. Then he stood there waiting, riffling his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the ~~Emergency~~ Committee of Emergency Measures. I was assigned, uh," and he said something else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.

Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall, even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no need for

The following

was written by the author of the

The first floor hall was long and the trip was short, and the low

deflected light gave out enough light to see with. The young

and even at the time of the photograph.

and through the thick glass at the window, and what was seen

it was the right one. Absolutely he was the looker. After he

stood there waiting, sitting on the steps nervously in the air

then for the first time the door, he broke right away.

"Good evening," he said and I was sure of the answer

position of emergency measures. I was satisfied, and he said

and it was under the light that the girl was to hear.

Instead of the light, the light was to hear.

and the light was to hear.

anyone else. She licked her lips quickly and smiled again. "Uh, come on in."

The young man came in, and the girl clumsily took off his coat. She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"

"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very quickly. *Then he realized he was sitting on his coat.*
~~It was the chair where she had put his coat, and he was leaning on~~

~~it.~~ Not wanting to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and sighed as though he were ~~was~~ very comfortable.

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you very much."

"Fine," she said, and left the room through a side door.

He riffled his fingers some more and worried about what would happen next. He didn't know quite what he would do. He was excited, ^{were} and a little scared. He wondered if he ~~was~~ making a good impression.

There was a mirror across the room and he squinted at it, trying to ~~His hair was greasy, but at least it was in place.~~
~~His face was clean, for all he could tell.~~
see what he looked like. His gray suit was rumpled and a little dirty,

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but very few civilians were better dressed. There were very few

His hair was greasy, but at least it was all in place. civilians anyhow. He wasn't ~~wasn't~~ really satisfied with the way he

looked, but there was nothing he could do about it. The girl wasn't

actuallyx

that pretty, She did excite him a little, though, but that was

squirmed a little, and probably because of what was going to happen. He/crossed his legs

the other way.

~~and wall-to-wall carpeting were there.~~

~~with dull-colored walls and old plastic-covered furniture~~
The room looked almost like any other room, / The young man

~~there was nothing special there~~

~~thought for an instant that he could remember rooms all being different,~~

~~was a picture of a dog on the dresser. It~~

~~but that was before the war and everything, a long time ago. It was~~

~~was a cute~~ looked like a friendly ~~dog~~ but that was foolish.

~~rather hard to remember back that far. Besides, there were some pic-~~

Once a dog had come toward ~~him~~ ^{the young man} on the
~~tures of flowers and things on the wall, and that cheered it up slightly.~~

street, looking as though it wanted to be

He noticed a brightly colored picture of a cocker spaniel on a dresser,

Friendly, but he got frightened and threw

and that reminded him of how dogs had once been cute and friendly.

a rock at it.

Now they were wild and you shot them. Funny how things changed. He

wished the girl would come back in.

She did come back in, carrying a trayx of coffee things. She

put ~~them~~ it on the dresser. Then she sat down herself and tried to

think of something to say.

He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, ~~that~~

~~was a bit before~~ trying not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered

but very few civilians were present. There were very few
 civilians at home. I went with the way to
 looked, but there was nothing to see about it. The way was

entirely
 that way. One did not see a little, however, but that was
 surprised a little and
 possibly because of what was going to happen. He was a little

the other way.
 and half the wall of the house was
 with blue-colored walls and old pictures covered the walls.
 The room looked almost like any other room, but the walls

looked for an instant that he could not see all the pictures
 that were before the wall. It was a little bit of a
 room that was before the wall. It was a little bit of a

room that was before the wall. It was a little bit of a
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that was the last thing he had said. Silently he stirred saccharin into his cup.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do."

She wet her lips, as she always did when she could think of nothing to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.
want it black,

"No, I don't, but it was very thoughtful of you. Thank you again." He added cream. It wasn't really cream, ~~but people who wanted~~
kind of people called it cream.
~~it was a~~ starch emulsion, but it changed the color and flavor
of your coffee a little, ~~and people didn't really know~~ and
most people had forgotten the difference anyway.

"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I thought you might be one of them."

"No," he said, "I'm normal."

"That's good," said the girl, *and she laughed a little.*

"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody," he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet her lips with her tongue. ^M
"By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Uh, my name is Peter. Bronsky."

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Peter Bronsky."

"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."

"Please call me Peter," he said.

"All right," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He sipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here," she added. "We just moved in when the war started.

"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and forced a smile.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all right."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained.

"More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got assigned here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked to do it-- the regular way-- because, you know, that test tube business-- well, I'd rather it was you know, like I said. Natural." She looked at him and smiled a little. He smiled back, and took a quick sip of coffee.

"I understand how you feel," said Peter. "I guess the government doesn't care how you do it, as long as you have a baby."

"I talked it over with my mother," said Ann. She told me to do it

"It's too bad," Ann said. "I mean, having to have babies just (OVER)

for the war effort. It would be so much nicer if you waited till you felt like it."

"Peace ^{must} ~~may~~ be built. "Don't be unpatriotic," said Peter. "We have to preserve our way of life."

"Oh, I'm not being unpatriotic," she said. "I know we have to

You're right, preserve our way of life./ Peace must be built, like they say. It's just too bad there's a war and so many soldiers keep getting killed."

"Of course it's too bad. ~~But there's nothing we can do about it.~~

~~We just have to do the jobs the Committee gives us.~~ But there's nothing we can do about it.

the Committee We just have to do the jobs ~~the~~ gives us." He looked at her eyes

and she looked away from him in embarrassment. "I mean, it's what we have to do."

"The Committee does the best it can," quoted the girl. "It always has and it always will, for the duration."

"Of course," said Peter.

Another door opened, and a flabby woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is my mother," explained Ann. "Mother, this is Mr. Bronsky."

this way, because it's-- well--" She laughed, looking at the floor.

"Nicer."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man.

"I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. Haven't you noticed? They're all at the front."

"Oh," said Peter.

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter, "I just wondered."

This is my mother," she repeated."

"~~How~~ Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

"Mother, Mr. Bronsky is from the Committee on Emergency Measures."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling," she said, ~~very quickly~~ hurriedly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Bronsky, it was nice meeting you." He held out his hand and she took it. Her hand was loose and damp, but it clasped his tightly. "Please, Mr. Bronsky," she said, "don't hurt her." She left the room and closed the door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do something else first, or something."

"Something like what?"

"I don't know ~~what~~. There are lots of other things to do. I can't think of anything special."

"Well, I think we better not. This is ~~is~~ kind of a job. ~~Mmmmmmm~~
Don't forget, peace must be built." That was the only thing he could think of to say.

"Oh, of course, you're right."

He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."

"Gee, I guess so."

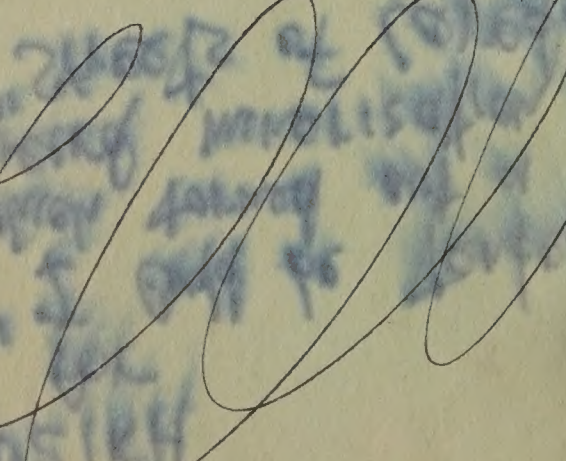
"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better tell you, you're very nice." He tried to look very sincere. "I can't think of anybody I'd rather do it with."

"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we'd better start. A job is a job."

"All right," she said, *trying to smile.*

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Theodor Nelson

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New York 23, N.Y.

"The Assignment"

The third floor hall was long and the rug was worn, and the few unfrosted bulbs didn't give off quite enough light to see with. The young man stopped for the fourth time in front of the apartment door. He squinted through his thick glasses at the number, and again made sure it was the right one. Impulsively he rang the doorbell. Then he stood there waiting, riffling his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the Bureau of Emergency Measures. I was assigned, uh," and he said something else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.

Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall, even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no need for anyone else. She licked her lips quickly and smiled again. "Uh, come on in."

The young man came in, and the girl clumsily took off his coat. She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"

"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very quickly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat. Not wanting to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and sighed as though he were very comfortable.

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"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some
coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"
"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very
quickly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat. Not wanting
to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and shifted as
though he were very comfortable.

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you very much."

"Fine," she said, and left the room through a side door.

He riffled his fingers some more and wondered about what would happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room and he squinted at it, trying to see what he looked like. His gray suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not many civilians were better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was greasy, but at least it was all in place. He wasn't really satisfied with the way he looked, but there was nothing he could do about it. The girl wasn't actually pretty enough that it mattered, anyway. She did excite him a little, though, but that was probably because of what was going to happen. He squirmed a little, and crossed his legs the other way.

The room was nothing special. There was a colored picture of a dog on the dresser. It looked like a friendly dog, but he realized that was a foolish idea. He had only once seen a live dog. It had come toward him on the street, but he couldn't be sure it was friendly and he had thrown a rock at it. He wished the girl would come back.

She did come back, carrying a tray of coffee things. She put it on the dresser. Then she sat down herself and tried to think of something to say.

He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing he had said to her. Silently he stirred saccharin into his cup.

...but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made.
...just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you
very much."

"Time," she said, and left the room through a side door.
He rifled his fingers somewhere and wondered about what would
happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if
he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room
and he squinted at it, trying to see what he looked like. His grey
suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not many civilians were
better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was greasy,
but at least it was all in place. He wasn't really satisfied with
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He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying
not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing
he had said to her. Silently he stirred saccharin into his cup.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do." She wet her lips, as she always did when she would think of nothing to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.

"No, I don't want it black, but it was very thoughtful of you. Thank you again." He added cream. It wasn't really cream, it was a kind of starch emulsion, but people called it cream. It changed the color and flavor of your coffee a little, and most people had forgotten the difference anyway.

"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I thought you might be one of them."

"No," he said, "I'm normal."

"That's good," said the girl. She wet her lips and laughed a little.

"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody," he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet ~~her~~ her lips. "By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Uh, my name is Peter. Bronsky. Peter Bronsky."

"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."

"Please call me Peter," he said.

"All right," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He sipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here," she added. "We just moved in when the war started."

"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and forced a smile.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to

like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do."

She wet her lips, as she always did when she would think of nothing to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.

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"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I

thought you might be one of them."

"No," he said. "I'm normal."

"That's good," said the girl. She wet her lips and laughed a

little.

"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody,"

he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet her

mouth with her lips. "By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Um, my name is Peter. Brooklyn."

Peter Brooklyn."

"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."

"Please call me Peter," he said.

"All right," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He

slipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here."

she added. We just moved in when she started.

"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and forced a smile.

"This sort of thing is new to me: I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all right." I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained. "More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got assigned here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked for it to be this way, because, you know, that test tube business, well. I'd rather it was you know, like I said. Natural." She looked at him and smiled a little. He smiled back, and took a quick sip of coffee.

"I understand how you feel," said Peter. "I guess the Committee doesn't care how, as long as you have a baby."

"I talked it over with my mother," said Ann. "She told me to do it this way, because it's, well." She laughed, looking at the floor. "Nicer."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man. "I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, riffling the fingers of his left hand. "Of course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter, "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flabby woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bronsky, Mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bronsky. This is my mother," she repeated.

"~~Mr~~ Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all

right. I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained.

"More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want

to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got assigned here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked for it to be this way, because

you know, that test tube business, well, I'd rather it was you know,

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do it this way, because it's, well," She laughed, looking at the

floor. "Nicer."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man.

"I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, lifting the fingers of his left hand. "Of

course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter. "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flashy woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bronsky, Mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bronsky. This is my mother," she repeated.

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

"Mother, Mr. Bronsky is from the Committee on Emergency Measures."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling," she said, hurriedly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Bronsky, it was nice meeting you." He held out his hand and she took it. ~~His hand was warm and dry and his~~
~~damp, but when she gripped it~~ The flesh of her hand was loose and damp, but her grip was tight. "Please, Mr. Bronsky," she said, "don't hurt her." She left the room and closed the door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do something else first, or something."

"Something like what?"

"I don't know. There are lots of other things to do. I can't think of anything special."

"Well, this is kind of a job. I mean I think we better not. We have to remember, it is, like, kind of a job."

"Oh, of course, you're right."

He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."

"Gee, I guess so."

"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better tell you, you're very nice." He riffled his fingers and tried to

tell you, you're very nice." He filled his fingers and tried to

"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better

"Gee, I guess so."

He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."

"Oh, of course, you're right."

We have to remember, it is, like, kind of a job."

"Well, this is kind of a job. I mean I think we better not

think of anything special."

"I don't know. There are lots of other things to do. I can't

"Something like what?"

thing else first, or something."

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do some-

he said.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well,"

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

She left the room and closed the door quietly.

her grip was tight. "Please, Mr. Broome," she said, "don't hurt her."

The flesh of her hand was loose and damp, but

He held out his hand and she took it.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Broome, it was nice meeting you."

"Good night," said Ann.

she said, hurriedly.

alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling."

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two

"Please to meet you," said Peter.

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

Robert, Mr. Broome is from the Committee on Emergency Measures.

look very sincere. "I can't think of anybody I'd rather do it with."

"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."

"All right," she said, trying to smile.

*to be a
professional
that
the situation is not
effectively
motivated
not enough!
who's fault
why the
emergency?*



"I can't think of anybody I'd rather do it with."

"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."

"All right," she said, trying to smile.

A young man with thick glasses stood outside the apartment, riffling his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang?"

~~I was sent by the Bureau of Emergency Measures.~~
~~was sent by the Bureau of Emergency Measures.~~ I was ^{assigned} sent, uh," and he said something else

under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.

She tried to smile. "I'm Ann Lang," she said. She looked around and behind him for no good reason. She licked her lips quickly and smiled again. "Uh, come on in."

The young man came in, ^{and the girl clumsily took off} ~~The girl walked past him and he~~ ^{his coat.} started to turn, but he felt her taking off his coat and

~~muttered embarrassment.~~ She put it ~~carefully~~ into the closet and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"

^{quickly} "No, thank you," replied the young man. He sat down ~~on the nearest sofa-bed by the window.~~ ^{in the nearest chair.}

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

A young man with silver glasses stood outside the apartment.

rubbing his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl

opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang?"

"I was told you were," she said, "and he said something else

under his breath. I didn't try to hear."

She tried to smile. "I am Lang," she said. She looked

around and behind him for a good reason. She flicked her lips

slightly and called a name. "He came on in."

The young man waited. The girl waited next him and he

waited for her to lead him into the door.

She put it straight into the closet

and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like

some coffee, or, uh, something to drink?"

"No, thank you," replied the young man. He sat down on

the edge of the sofa.

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's

all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

"Well, thank you very much," said the young man. He crossed his legs uncertainly.

"Fine," she said, and disappeared into a side door.

He looked out the window, but didn't see much. Just a street. He recrossed his legs and looked at the room. It was plain, *nothing special.* ~~There was a coffee-table in front of him and two wooden chairs were standing by the wall. There was also a pine sideboard with an ugly lamp on top of it.~~ He blew his nose.

The girl came back in with a cup of coffee and a cream pitcher. She put them down on *a table beside* ~~the coffee-table in front of~~ him, and sat down herself.

He picked up the coffee. ~~There were four lumps of sugar on the saucer. He dropped them into the coffee.~~

"Thank you very much," he said, trying not to say it too loudly. *He stirred in some sugar.* ~~He added some cream.~~

"I just thought you might like it black," she said.

"Some people ~~do~~ do." She wet her lips and smiled.

~~"No, I'm normal," he said. "I mean, I don't like to~~

"No, I don't, BUT it was thoughtful. Thank you again. He added cream."

"Thank you very much," said the young man. He

crossed his legs and said:

"Yes," she said, and disappeared into a side door.

He looked out the window, but didn't see much. Just a

street. He recrossed his legs and looked at the room. It

was plain. There was a bed, a table, a chair, and a

wooden chest against the wall. There was also a

place at the head of the bed. He blew his nose.

The girl came in with a cup of coffee and a cream

pitcher. She put down the pitcher and the cup.

Now for the

his, and sat down.

He picked up the coffee. There was a spoon in it.

He took a sip. It was good.

"Thank you very much," he said, taking the cup away from

himself. He sat down.

"I just thought you might like it," she said.

He sat there for a while. She sat next to him.

He looked at her. She looked at him.

Not to think
of the girl
who knew

say

~~"Nobody does," said the girl.~~

No

"Um," he said. "Do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet her lips with her tongue. "By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Uh, my name is Peter. Peter Bronsky. Please call me Peter."

"Sure I will," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment."

He sipped coffee.

room, but I sleep here"

"Thank you very much. There's another ~~room~~ she added.

"We just moved in when the war started."

She licked her lips and forced a smile. "This sort of thing

is new to me," she said uncertainly. "I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly

all right."

explained. "I thought it was better to get pregnant this way, more natural and every thing."

~~She looked and looked at the wall. "Why aren't you in the~~

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want to do anything to you that you don't want."

"It's all right, honest."

"My eyes. I didn't score too well in that mental bus-

"Good," said Peter.

Oh, say,

"Yeah," she said. "This way is best, I think. How did you get this job instead of the Army?"

"My eyes." He ~~gestured~~ gestured. "You know."

"No," he said, "do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet her

lips with her tongue. "By the way, you haven't told me your

name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Oh, my name is Peter. Peter

Brown. Please call me Peter."

"Sure I will," said Ann.

He opened the door. "This is a very nice apartment."

He sipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another man," she added.

She licked her lips and forced a smile. "This sort of thing

is new to me," she said uncertainly. "I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly

all right."

"You're the nicest man I've met," she said.

"I'm glad to hear that," he said.

"Oh, I see."

~~"Are you still in school?"~~

~~"No. I quit last month, right after my sixteenth birthday. I have a job sewing uniforms."~~

A door opened, and a rather flabby ~~mild-mannered~~ woman came into the room. "Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is my mother," explained Ann. "Mother, this is Mr. Bronsky. This is my mother," she added to Peter. "Oh, I'm afraid I already said that."

"That's all right," said Peter.

Bureau of Emergency Measures
"Mother, Mr. Bronsky is from the ~~population bureau~~."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang, "how do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead.

"Good night, darling," she said, very quickly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Bronsky, it was nice meeting

"Oh, I see."

"And you still in school?"

"I have a job sewing uniforms."

A door opened, and a rather flabby woman

came into the room. "Hello," she said, "who is this nice

young gentleman?"

"This is my mother," explained Ann. "Mother, this is

Mr. Brown. This is my mother," she added to Peter. "Oh,

I'm afraid I already said that."

"That's all right," said Peter.

"Mother, Mr. Brown is from the neighborhood."

"See," said Mrs. Lang, "how do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave

you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead.

"Good night, dear," she said, very quickly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Brown, it was nice meeting

you." He held out his hand and she took it. Her hand was loose and damp, but it clasped his tightly. "Please, Mr. Bronsky," she said, "don't hurt her." She left the room and closed the door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said. "Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table.

"Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could see a movie first, or something."

"No," he said, "I couldn't afford it."

"Oh, I'll pay."

"Well, what I mean is, ~~no~~, we'd better not. This is kind of a job. We can't let the ~~war effort~~ ^{country} down, can we?" he joked.

"Oh, no, you're right."

He cleared his throat.

about
"Well, I think maybe it's time."
~~"Do you mind if I kiss you?"~~ *ABOUT HERE*

"Gee, I guess so," she said.
"No, not at all. Go right ahead." She leaned toward

him and inappropriately put her hand on his shoulder.

He hadn't meant it that way, but he had to now. He drew

He held out his hand and she took it. Bernard was loose

and she said, "Don't want you." She left the room and closed the

door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee,"

he said. "Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table.

"Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could

see a movie first, or something."

"No," he said. "I couldn't afford it."

"Oh, I'll pay."

"No, no, you're not to pay. This is kind of a job. We can't

let the waitress pay, can we?" he asked.

"Oh, no, you're not to pay."

He cleared his throat. "Who's your friend?"

"No, not at all. Go to the bank, and get the exchange

and inspect yourself, but not on his shoulder.

He didn't mean it. It was just a way to get to know him.

her into his lap and kissed her firmly. Ann fumbled to support herself, and held him tightly. The kiss was dull and pointless. He released her and exhaled. She was looking into his eyes, waiting uncertainly.

He kissed her again. This time he caressed her lips with his tongue, trying to probe between. Finally she acquiesced and parted her lips, but uncomprehendingly she did nothing else. He reached his hand between to grasp her breast. It was soft and small under her bra, but the wires of the bra restrained the full play of his grip.

He ended the kiss and bent to kiss her neck, but she moved clumsily and his lips touched her hair instead. He released her.

"Well," he said, "shall we do it here?"

Ann got up. "Just a minute." She moved the coffee-table out of the way and motioned for him to get up. Together

they unfolded the sofa-bed. *She turned out the overhead light, leaving only the dim lamp.*

"There," she said. Her tongue wet her lips. "Shall I undress?"

6
into his lap and kissed her firmly. Ann humbled to sup-

port herself, and held him tightly. Her face was still and

pointless. He released her, and exhaled. She was looking

into his eyes, and was uncertainly.

He kissed her again. This time he pressed her lips with

his tongue, trying to prove himself. Finally she acquiesced

and parted her lips, but unconsciously she did nothing else

He pressed his hand between her breasts. It was soft

and small under her breasts, but the kiss of the lips restricted

the full play of his lips.

He ended the kiss and bent to kiss her neck, but she moved

slightly and his lips touched her hair instead. He released

"Well," he said, "shall we do it now?"

Ann got up. "Just a minute," she moved the coffee-cups

out of the way and got down for him to get up. Together

they undressed the sofa-bed.

"There," she said. Her hands were on her hips. "Shall I

undress?"

"Please do," said Peter. He unbuttoned his clothes and hung them on a chair. So did she. She lay down on the bed.

"Like this?"

"No," he said, and positioned her. He placed himself, and pushed gently. She gasped through her teeth. He relaxed.

"What's the matter? Didn't you see the doctor?"

"No. I wanted it to be the natural way."

"Well, I don't want to hurt you."

"That's all right."

He pushed again, and kissed her. She embraced him tightly, and slowly they flowed together.

She was breathing hard. "It's nice," she whispered.

He moved now, and gradually she was excited to passion that she could not express. Twice she half-heartedly tried to kiss him; and he tried in every way to give her pleasure, but clumsily was unable to succeed.

Finally, tentatively, he got up. "Is it all right if I stay the night?" he asked.

"Why?"

"Please do," said Peter. He unbuttoned his clothes

and hung them on a chair. He did not. She lay down on the bed.

"Like this?"

"No," he said, and positioned her. He placed himself.

and turned round. She stepped through the door. He relaxed.

"What's the matter? Didn't you see the doctor?"

"No. I wanted it to be the natural way."

"Well, I don't want to hurt you."

"That's all right."

He pushed again, and kissed her. She embraced him tightly.

and slowly they flowed together.

She was breathing hard. "Like this," she whispered.

He moved now, and gradually she was carried to passion.

and she could not breathe. Twice she half-heartedly tried

to rise him, and she tried in every way to give him pleasure.

but usually was unable to do so.

He finally, hesitatingly, he got up. "Is it all right?"

she asked.

"Yes."

"Well, we ought to make sure we've done our best. We should try a couple of times more."

"All right," she said.

He lay down again and added, "You're very kind."

8
"Well, we ought to make sure we've done our best. We

should try a couple of times more."

"All right," she

he lay down again and added, "You're very kind."

89

14 DEC 54

Theodor Nelson

88 Central Park West
New York 23, N.Y.

"The Assignment"

The third floor hall was long and the rug was worn, and the few unfrosted bulbs didn't give off quite enough light to see with. The young man stopped for the fourth time in front of the apartment door. He squinted through his thick glasses at the number, and again made sure it was the right one. Impulsively he rang the doorbell. Then he stood there waiting, riffling his fingers nervously in the air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.

"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the Bureau of Emergency Measures. I was assigned, uh," and he said something else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.

Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall, even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no need for anyone else. She licked her lips quickly and smiled again. "Uh, come on in."

The young man came in, and the girl clumsily took off his coat. She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.

"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some coffee, or, uh-- something to drink?"

"No, thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very quickly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat. Not wanting to seem awkward, he pretended the coat was not there and sighed as though he were very comfortable.

"The Assignment"

The third floor hall was long and the way was short, and the few
unnoticed people didn't give off quite enough light to see with. The
young man stepped for the first time in front of the apartment
door. He walked through the thin glass of the door, and again
into the hall. It was the right one. Instantly he turned the doorbell.
Then he stood there waiting, feeling his fingers nervously in the
air. When the girl opened the door, he spoke right away.
"Good evening. Are you Miss Ann Lang? I was sent by the Bureau
of Emergency Assistance. I was assigned, uh," and he said something
else under his breath that the girl didn't try to hear.
Instead she tried to smile. She looked around him in the hall,
even though she knew there was nobody else. There was no light for
anyone else. She looked at him with pity and called again. "Up
come in."
The young man came in, and the girl quickly took off the coat.
She put it on the back of a chair and turned to him.
"Would you like to sit down?" she asked. "Would you like some
tea, or, uh, something to drink?"
"Thank you," replied the young man, sitting down very
quietly. Then he noticed he was sitting on his coat, and making
to get up, he pretended the coat was not there and slipped on it.
Though he was very comfortable.

"Oh, but are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made. We just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uncertainly. "Well, thank you very much."

"Fine," she said, and left the room through a side door.

He riffled his fingers some more and wondered about what would happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room and he squinted at it, trying to see what he looked like. His gray suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not many civilians were better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was greasy, but at least it was all in place. He wasn't really satisfied with the way he looked, but there was nothing he could do about it. The girl wasn't actually pretty enough that it mattered, anyway. She did excite him a little, though, but that was probably because of what was going to happen. He squirmed a little, and crossed his legs the other way.

The room was nothing special. There was a colored picture of a dog on the dresser. It looked like a friendly dog, but he realized that was a foolish idea. He had only once seen a live dog. It had come toward him on the street, but he couldn't be sure it was friendly and he had thrown a rock at it. He wished the girl would come back.

She did come back, carrying a tray of coffee things. She put it on the dresser. Then she sat down herself and tried to think of something to say.

He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing he had said to her. Silently he stirred saccharin into his cup.

But are you sure you don't want any coffee? It's all made.
We just had dinner," she explained.

The young man crossed his legs uneasily. "Well, thank you
very much."

"Please," she said, and left the room through a side door.

He tilted his fingers nervously and wondered about what would
happen next. He didn't quite know what he would do. He wondered if
he were making a good impression. There was a mirror across the room
and he glanced at it, trying to see what he looked like. His grey
suit was rumpled and a little dirty, but not very different from
better dressed. There were not many civilians. His hair was grey,
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on the dresser. They sat down, but he tried to think of some-
thing to say.

He picked up the coffee. "Thank you very much," he said, trying
not to say it too loudly. Then he remembered that was the last thing
he had said to her. Silently he stirred sugar into his cup.

"I left out the cream because I thought you might happen to like it black," she said. "I understand some people still do." She wet her lips, as she always did when she would think of nothing to say, and smiled vacantly, which was something else she always did.

"No, I don't want it black, but it was very thoughtful of you. Thank you again." He added cream. It wasn't really cream, it was a kind of starch emulsion, but people called it cream. It changed the color and flavor of your coffee a little, and most people had forgotten the difference anyway.

"Well, I heard that some people drink it without cream, so I thought you might be one of them."

"No," he said, "I'm normal."

"That's good," said the girl. She wet her lips and laughed a little.

"What I meant was, I don't want to make trouble for anybody," he added. "Um, do you mind if I call you Ann?"

"Please do," she replied instantly. Again she wet ~~her~~ her lips. "By the way, you haven't told me your name."

"Oh," he said, "excuse me. Uh, my name is Peter. Bronsky. Peter Bronsky."

"That's nice," said Ann. "I mean, that's a pretty good name."

"Please call me Peter," he said.

"All right," said Ann.

He cleared his throat. "This is a very nice apartment." He sipped coffee.

"Thank you very much. There's another room, but I sleep here," she added. "We just moved in when the war started."

"Listen," she added. She licked her lips and forced a smile.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all right." I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained. "More natural and everything."

"I see what you mean," he said. "Yes. But I sure don't want to do anything to you that you don't want. I just got assigned here."

"It's all right, honest. I asked for it to be this way, because, you know, that test tube business, well. I'd rather it was you know, like I said. Natural." She looked at him and smiled a little. He smiled back, and took a quick sip of coffee.

"I understand how you feel," said Peter. "I guess the Committee doesn't care how, as long as you have a baby."

"I talked it over with my mother," said Ann. "She told me to do it this way, because it's, well." She laughed, looking at the floor. "Nicer."

"Well, don't you have any boy friends?" asked the young man. "I mean, how come they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, riffling the fingers of his left hand. "Of course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter, "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flabby woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said, "who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bronsky, Mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bronsky. This is my mother," she repeated.

"~~Ann~~ Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

"This sort of thing is new to me. I'm a virgin."

"Oh," said Peter, "I'm sorry. I mean, that's perfectly all

right." I don't mind."

"I thought it was better to get pregnant this way," she explained.

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"I mean, how does they assigned me?"

"There aren't any boys. They're at the front."

"Oh," said Peter, lifting the fingers of his left hand. "Of

course they are."

"Why?" she asked. "Do you mind?"

"Oh, no," said Peter. "I just wondered."

The side door opened, and a flashy woman came into the room.

"Hello," she said. "Who is this nice young gentleman?"

"This is Mr. Bromley, mother. This is my mother," she explained.

"Mr. Peter Bromley. This is my mother," she repeated.

"Ann, I want to meet you," said Peter.

"Mother, Mr. Bronsky is from the Committee on Emergency Measures."

"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

"Pleased to meet you," said Peter.

Mrs. Lang tried to smile. "Well, I think I'll leave you two alone." She kissed Ann quickly on the forehead. "Good night, darling," she said, hurriedly.

"Good night," said Ann.

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Bronsky, it was nice meeting you." He held out his hand and she took it. ~~How warm was his hand, how tight his~~
~~damp, how warm his grip was~~ The flesh of her hand was loose and damp, but her grip was tight. "Please, Mr. Bronsky," she said, "don't hurt her." She left the room and closed the door quietly.

Peter sat down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well," he said.

"Are you in any hurry?" she asked. "I mean, we could do something else first, or something."

"Something like what?"

"I don't know. There are lots of other things to do. I can't think of anything special."

"Well, this is kind of a job. I mean I think we better not. We have to remember, it is, like, kind of a job."

"Oh, of course, you're right."

He cleared his throat. "Well, I think maybe it's about time."

"Gee, I guess so."

"Oh, let me tell you something. That is, I guess I'd better tell you, you're very nice." He riffled his fingers and tried to

"Tell you, you're very nice." He lifted his fingers and tried to

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"Yes, I guess so."

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"I don't know. There are lots of other things to do. I can't

"Something like what?"

thing else first, or something."

"And you are very busy?" she asked. "I mean, we could do some-

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He finished the coffee and set it down on the table. "Well,"

"Thank you very much," said the girl.

Peter and down again. "This is very good coffee," he said.

She left the room and closed the door quietly.

her eyes were tight. "Please, Mr. Brown," she said, "don't hurt me."

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he held out his hand and she took it. "Remember me to your mother."

Mrs. Lang turned. "Well, Mr. Brown, it was nice meeting you."

"Good night," said Ann.

she said, hurriedly.

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"I see," said Mrs. Lang. "How do you do?"

"Mother, Mr. Brown is from the Committee on Emergency Measures."

look very sincere. "I can't think of anybody I'd rather do it with."

"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."

"All right," she said, trying to smile.

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"Thank you," she said.

"Well, I guess we really ought to start. A job is a job."

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"The Argument"

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